

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman
House Education and Labor
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Health, Education,
Labor, & Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Education and Labor
Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education,
Labor, & Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Scott and Alexander, and Ranking Members Foxx and Murray,

We write today in support of substantial investments in the next COVID-19 relief package that would support professional learning opportunities for K-12 educators on online education and other strategies necessary to support new ways of keeping learning going. In order to support student learning such an investment must meet the stringent criteria found in the Every Student Succeeds Act's (ESSA) definition of professional development, that it be: sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded and data-driven. We appreciate your leadership in ensuring that the CARES Act included immediate, short-term relief for the nation's educational system, but believe Congress needs to make far greater investments to stabilize K-12 education in general and that a portion of that new funding should be directed to professional development specifically. Towards that end, we support the provision of at least \$200 billion in additional funding for K-12 education through the existing Education Stabilization Fund, with at least \$2.13 billion of that sum flowing to professional learning with a particular emphasis on delivering and developing educator skills in an online environment and other strategies to keep learning going. This specific sum equals the FY2020 appropriation for Title II-A of ESSA.

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has launched us into a new era for education. While educators have done a heroic job in immediately adjusting their practice to educate students in our new context, more support in the form of professional development is needed to navigate this new learning in the short- and long-term. Educators will continually need to develop and refine their practice including how to effectively use technology, address any equity gaps in learning, and provide personalized instruction during this period that will present a continually changing learning environment. We believe that an investment of \$2.13 billion in professional development, which has garnered bipartisan support [in the past](#), will support states and districts in building their long-term capacity to meet the immediate challenges and changes in schooling. At a time when communities face the largest economic downturn in nearly a century, only significant federal investments in our nation's educators will ensure that all students, including those in historically underserved communities, can continue to learn online or in classrooms.

The economic hardship now faced by states and school districts is real, making the need for additional federal investments in education critical. [Over 30 million Americans](#) have already filed for unemployment and [state and local](#) governments are already planning to reduce support for public education. In fact, some [preliminary estimates](#) show state revenue drops of between 10% and 20% for this and the next school year, with deeper drops in revenue in the 2021-2022 school year. State decreases in revenue—which provide nearly half of all P-12 education funding—will directly impact schools and the students they serve, especially those the furthest from opportunity.

The closure of nearly all school buildings nationwide and the likely persistence [or recurrence](#) of those closures, as well as new ways of conducting schooling, like [staggered scheduling](#), means that online learning and new approaches, will continue for the remainder of this school year, this summer, and likely deep into the next school year. In order for online learning to succeed, educators must receive high-quality professional learning to build a new skill set and [approach to pedagogy](#) that can enrich the way they use technology to support student growth. [A recent poll](#) of superintendents found that while nearly 80% intended to provide professional development on online learning, only 24% of respondents indicated that 91-100% of their instructional staff are currently equipped to deliver online learning. Likewise, new ways of schooling like staggered scheduling, expanded learning opportunities (whether during the school year or [over the summer](#)), and more will require resources for professional development. For all of these reasons, we strongly support reserving \$2.13 billion of new Education Stabilization Funds for professional development.

We know that during and after our current emergency, educators will continue to be the most important factor to student learning—wherever that learning may occur. We also know that sustained investments in professional development, [which research shows](#), when well-designed and effectively implemented, leads to improvements in teacher practice and student outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on state and local resources, does not remove from us the responsibility of ensuring that federal investments in professional development remain at the forefront of providing equal educational opportunity. Rather, it demands that the federal government steps up to provide the funding necessary to support states and districts in building long-term capacity to meet any challenges to student learning.

Therefore, we request that you make an investment of at least \$200 billion to support K-12 education in the next recovery package and allocate at least \$2.13 billion in professional development, as defined in ESSA, that ultimately allows us to navigate through and emerge from this crisis in a way that supports a more equitable and excellent education for all students.

We appreciate your consideration and thank you again for your continued efforts to support students, families, and educators during this crisis.

Sincerely,

Access 4 Learning Community
American Library Association
Association for Educational Communications & Technology
Association for Middle Level Education
Association of Computer Technology Educators of Maine
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Arkansas Society for Technology in Education
Arizona Technology in Education Association
Bogota School District (NJ)
Center for Black Educator Development
City Year, Inc.
CK-12 Foundation
Committee for Children
Consortium for School Networking
Council of Administrators of Special Education
CUE, Inc.
Edcamp Foundation
EDGE Consulting Partners
Educational Theatre Association
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Illinois Digital Educators Alliance
Indiana Connected Educators
InnovateEDU
International Society for Technology in Education
Jefferson Education Exchange
Learning Forward
Louisiana Computer Using Educators
Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 (KS)
MassCUE
Michelle Burris, The Century Foundation
Michigan Association for Computer Uses in Learning
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Teachers of English
National Institute for Excellence in Teaching
National Research Center for Distance Education and Technological Advancements
National Science Teaching Association
National Summer Learning Association
National Writing Project
Nebraska Educational Technology Association
New England ISTE
New Hampshire Society for Technology in Education
New Jersey Association of School Librarians
New Jersey Educational Computing Cooperative
New Leaders
New York State Association For Computers and Technologies in Education
Oklahoma Technology Association
Orange Board of Education (NJ)
Project Tomorrow
Ramsey School District (NJ)
Rhode Island Society of Technology Educators
School Social Work Association of America
SHAPE America
Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education
State Educational Technology Directors Association
State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education
Teacher Education Division, Council for Exceptional Children
Texas Computer Education Association
The Learning Accelerator
Turnaround for Children
Virginia Society for Technology in Education